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THE HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

Home Economics Accomplishments of 1932

An interview between Miss Ruth Van Deman and Dr. Louise Stanley, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate stations, Tuesday, December 27, 1932.

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How do you do, Everybody?

This is the last Tuesday on the Household Calendar for 1932, and we're going to take a look backward. Now and then it's rather good to pause and see just what we've done before hurrying on to something new. So Dr. Louise Stanley has left her desk and come over to the studio with me to review for us the accomplishments in home economics during this past year. As you know, Doctor Stanley has been chief of the Bureau of Home Economics since it was organized in 1923.

Doctor Stanley, looking back over the year's work, what would you pick as the most important accomplishment, that is, if you can single out any one?

DOCTOR STANLEY: That is a difficult job, Miss Van Deman. If I may judge accomplishment in terms of demand I should say our food economics service. In a time of crisis such as this it is information about food that is demanded first. Whatever else we go without, we must have food to stop the pangs of hunger and food must be of the right kind and amount if we are to avoid malnutrition.

Every day, by mail and by telephone, come the demands. The calls come from homemakers, teachers, relief workers, in every State in the Union. They ask our help in planning diets - adequate diets for reduced incomes, emergency diets at the lowest possible cost. It is the greatest challenge to home economists since the World War. And we are able to meet it now better than we could then, because of our research studies.

We are translating the science of nutrition into terms of diet to safeguard health. For example, we suggest weekly market lists for families with children. In doing this we draw on all our scientific knowledge of the food requirements of the human body during childhood, adolescence, and adult years. And into the low-cost menus and recipes, we work what we know of calories, vitamins, minerals, other food essentials. We include the "protective" foods to satisfy that "hidden hunger," and we tell women how to prepare inexpensive meals so they will be appetizing. For nutritives must also be palatable.

If you've never thought of the practical everyday food suggestions of nutrition specialists in just this way before, maybe you haven't realized what is behind them. It takes the spotlight of some great national crisis like this depression or the World War to make such a service spectacular. But it's only because of the painstaking, nonspectacular research going on in the meantime that home economists can render such service when an emergency comes.

We are reaping the benefits of nutrition research started in the Department of Agriculture 40 years ago. Because of the work begun then by men and women of vision and carried forward by succeeding organizations, we can speak with

authority now about diet. The science of nutrition is comparatively new. Until just a few years ago, nobody counted calories, nobody joked about vitamins, nobody asked whether you've had your iron today. And even what we know now of the science of nutrition is only the beginning. But we do know enough to help people spend their food dollars on food necessary to health.

So, Miss Van Deman, to come back to your question, I'd say that the work we've done this year on low-cost diets is probably of most immediate benefit. But it's the kind of service that can never be measured by dollars and cents. Anybody can figure up the cost of food for a family or the cost of doctor's bills or outright illness. But probably no two persons could agree on exactly how much it's worth to protect a family against rickets, pellagra, and other ailments brought on by undernourishment.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Doctor Stanley, you remember there are some definite figures though on the number of requests for these low-cost food bulletins. We haven't been able to send all that relief agencies and teachers asked for, but to date we've met requests for over a million copies. This includes the circulars on "The family's food at low cost" and "Getting the most for your food money," and the market lists for the use of relief workers. Of course it does not include the weekly newspaper release called "The market basket" and the many other forms we're using to give this information on low-cost food to the public.

Doctor Stanley, I noticed you spoke of the research basic to these practical recommendations on family diet. Would you give us just an idea of some of the long-time projects under way?

DOCTOR STANLEY: Well, our vitamin studies are one series. By feeding tests with laboratory animals we're finding what foods we can rely on for the different vitamins. For example, this year we completed one test on the vitamin D content of eggs from hens fed cod-liver oil and other sources of vitamin D as part of their rations. This is the vitamin you remember that prevents and cures rickets, and children must have it to grow strong bones and good teeth. So it is extremely important to locate rich sources of this vitamin in common foods.

This egg work is one of several cooperative studies we have under way, linking production and consumption. These recent years have taught us that we must study foods, and textiles, and many other commodities from the consumer's standpoint, or the producer also will suffer. The Bureau of Home Economics in serving the consumer also helps the producer.

Our potato studies are another example. As Doctor Stuart of the Bureau of Plant Industry told you a few weeks ago, plant scientists are seeking to develop blight-resistant, better-yielding varieties of potatoes. We cooperate by making vitamin studies and cooking tests on these seedlings. Also in the big national project we find the factors that affect quality in meats we've taken an active part. We cook and help judge for palatability the cuts from experimental animals. This past year we made tests on beef, lamb, and pork. The results of these studies enable farmers to produce some tender, better flavored meat at lower cost. At the same time, we tell the housewife how to make a better choice of meats in the market and how best to cook every cut. There really is a best method of cooking for every cut and you can make the cheaper cuts appetizing by the right cooking.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Doctor Stanley, what about the cotton and wool studies in the textile division - don't they also follow through from production to consumption?

DOCTOR STANLEY: Yes they do, and what's more they are the first of their kind in the textile field. In cooperation with other agencies, we're studying textiles from the consumer standpoint. This is the plan. We take different commercial grades of cotton and kinds of wool, get them woven in fabrics. Then we run wearing tests on these fabrics to see how the different grades of the raw fibers stand up. Of course you are not interested in the details of these scientific studies. But if you're a grower of cotton or of wool, these facts will help you produce the best type of fiber for a certain purpose. And when we consumers know ahead of time how much service we can reasonably expect of a certain kind of cotton or wool made up into a fabric, think how much better we can select textiles on the retail counter.

Take the present situation in textiles. Reliable merchants and business leaders are alarmed by the amount of low quality fabrics flooding the market. No wonder the consumer hesitates to buy, and then after two or three disastrous experiences turns to a disinterested source for information. We give it by telling her how to judge quality in fabrics, that is, how to make simple tests on cotton, and wool, and silk fabrics before purchasing. Miss O'Brien has told you from time to time of some of these tests. To guide the consumer we have cooperated with other organizations in setting up quality specifications for certain textiles.

MISS VAN DEMAN: And, Doctor Stanley, don't forget the great demand for reliable methods of caring for clothing and conserving textiles. You know we simply can't meet the requests for the bulletin on stain removal.

DOCTOR STANLEY: Yes, this emergency is calling out all the practical applications of home economics research in textile chemistry. This publication telling how to take a hundred or more kinds of stains out of fabrics is just one example.

There's also an increased demand for designs for hygienic clothes for children. We've made such studies part of our work in cotton and wool utilization. For example, through our suggestions new fabrics for children's play suits are on the market. These fabrics are just right for outdoor wear: they're light in weight, but break the wind, and shed moisture. Some of them are also in the bright colors that children like and that truck drivers and motorists can see when a child darts suddenly across the street.

As soon as we put out these new designs for children's clothes, women began asking where to get the patterns. The commercial pattern companies have supplied the answer. Eight companies are now making patterns from 29 of our designs. Also several ready-to-wear clothing manufacturers are incorporating some of our self-help features and other ideas in the garments they are putting on the market. The sun suits we designed are no longer a summer novelty. Because of scientific research mothers understand why wearing sun suits helps their children to develop strong, sturdy bodies.

As I said a few minutes ago the science of nutrition is new. The application of science to clothing is even newer. The Bureau of Home Economics is engaged in research on both these subjects and many others important to the family. Send us your problems, we'll help you solve them if we can. I've given you today just a few examples of what we're doing.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Thank you, Doctor Stanley, we'll be looking for you to tell us of new developments.

Now, next Tuesday we'll be starting a new year on the Household Calendar. Dr. Faith Williams will be here with me to talk about the family budget and how to adjust it to 1933 conditions.

In the meantime, Happy New Year to you.

